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ABSTRACT

This study examines the significance of in-school communication systems in Japan, how the hardware is accommodated, and present communication practices in elementary schools. After World War II, Japanese education stressed children's autonomous study. In-school communication systems use became a popular teaching method. Administration of the in-school communication system by the children themselves can be an effective way of developing their cooperative and social abilities, as well as providing a means for media education. Participation in production and dissemination of programs enables children to change their standpoint from listening/receiving to sending/creating. Building-wide public address systems have been installed in elementary schools, and tape recorders, videotape recorders, and video cameras have become more prevalent. A survey found that: (1) almost all schools are equipped with audio and visual receiving apparatus; (2) programs are administered mostly during recess between class periods and consist of announcements and directions, story telling, music, news, and other presentations; and (3) efforts are being made to make in-school communication systems use more attractive to students. Two tables show the types of equipment used in schools and results of the questionnaire. (AEF)

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IN-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM AS A MEDIUM FOR MEDIA EDUCATION

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by
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ED 393 430

Review

In Japan, economists were interested in the instructional use of in-school communication systems (building-wide PA system and CATV) after World War II. They began to discuss the educational virtues of it. Consequently, there has been a steady development in the number of hardware in schools. In spite of this tendency, however, it is difficult to evaluate the success and the extent of their use in the educational purposes, though some pioneering schools launched the instructional utilization of these systems in their everyday practice.

Even so, we need to review the whole picture of the use of in-school communication system to figure out the future development of media education in this country. That is because in-school communication systems are quite useful when we intend to promote media education in schools. It is a good opportunity for children to learn how various media work in society by producing and disseminating their own programs for other classes within the school.

That is why this study was done. The problems and methods used are as follows:

1. What is the significance of in-school communication system according to some theoretical literature?

2. How is the accommodation with the hardware in schools achieved, considered from the Ministry's survey?

3. What is the present situation of the practices in elementary schools, by observation of a questionnaire survey?

Educational Significance of In-School Communication System--Pedagogical View

After the Second World War, Japanese education turned to stressing on children's autonomous study, for which the observations, study trips, experiments, surveys, and other activities in and out of campus were highly recommended as teaching methods. Using in-school communication systems was also among them.

On the other hand, using in-school communication had its roots in school broadcast since before WW2 in the sense of using receivers in the classrooms. People thought, however, that the important nature of using in-school broadcast was a new way of autonomous and active study for children.

The importance of in-school communication system as an opportunity for children's autonomous and active study can be found in the following points, they said:

1. They need to find the topic they want to present to the audience.

2. They have to collect and organize the materials for the program.

3. They must decide the presentation format most suitable to the content.

Secondly, administration of the in-school communication system by children themselves can be seen as an effective way of developing their ability in cooperation and sociability. Main points are as follows:

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1. During production and dissemination of programs, they have to take part in collecting materials, writing scenarios, various technical allotments and announcements in order to pursue their task cooperatively toward success.

2. In-school communication activities will be enriched by cooperation with local community and other schools.

Finally, in-school communication system can be seen as *mass media within a school*. It is possible for children to consider this as a chance to learn what mass media is. Therefore, this is a place for media education, because participation in production and dissemination makes children change their standpoint from listening-receiving to sending-creating. This shift of standpoint causes effective learning of media.

1. Children can learn vividly through their own experiences how mass media works and how the information conveyed by mass media is formed by expressive and creative activity, and acquire the ability to perceive information accurately.

2. The interchangeability of standpoints from receiving to creating and vice versa, and the close relationship between the two gives them the chance to often discuss media and information with each other. This, again makes kids creators and active receivers at the same time.

As a matter of fact, the concept of in-school communication system as one of the opportunities for media education is not yet widely understood. Even those who are practicing in this way tend to develop only the technical ability in children. The only example of using in-school communication system for media education is the practice at Seijo Elementary School in Tokyo which has kept its tradition since the late 1940s.

Growth of In-School Communication System in Elementary Schools

The supporting apparatus for in-school communication system has grown in number since the end of WW2. At the beginning, the Allied Forces put special effort on preparing schools with radio receivers to making use of school broadcast for their purpose of retraining of Japanese teachers.

According to the survey administered by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture since 1972 (1972, 1977, 1980, and every three years thereafter), building-wide PA systems were already installed in almost every school as early as 1980, while CCTV has also grown very rapidly. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Diffusion of Rate of Apparatus in Elementary Schools

	PA System	CTR	CCTV	VCR	V camera
72	93.9%	54.2%	10.5%	16.7%	12.9%
77	97.6	92.2	22.6	24.9	6.5
80	98.13	97.40	31.49	53.70	26.77
83	98.32	98.74	43.60	80.08	58.44
86	97.81	98.51	52.32	91.14	73.21
89	98.24	97.49	59.22	96.11	80.67
92	98.59	97.47	63.04	96.93	92.87

PA System: Building-wide PA system
CTR: Cassette tape-recorder
V camera: Video camera (Color), * including B&W

Moreover, tape recorders, VCRs, and video cameras have been growing in number, too. Video cameras, for example, experiencing upgrading in capability and model changes, reached to more than 90% in about 1990. It is easily seen that Japanese schools are well-equipped with enough hardware for making use of in-school communication system.

Present Situation of Using In-School Communication System: A Survey

We administered a questionnaire in January 1993 to disclose the present situation of using in-school communication system in elementary schools in Japan. The results are shown

in Table 2.

Almost all schools are equipped with audio and visual receiving apparatus. In-school communication practice is done through these systems mostly during recess between class periods. Programs consist of announcement and direction, music, signals, and other types mainly proposed by teachers. However, some by children are also included.

In most schools local productions are seen, half of them produced by the broadcast committee of the children's body. There are teacher's and children's groups for production and dissemination. In case of the children, the group is a part of the pupils government.

Efforts are placed on making in-school communication system attractive to pupils by familiar programming, programming for specific grades as targets, introducing attractive formats of presentation such as quizzes and interviews, and producing programs based upon questionnaires and requests.

Concerned teachers feel the problems of in-school communication. They include "mannerism makes kids dull towards it," "teachers suffer from difficulty in sparing their time to guiding children's activities" and "need for better apparatus." One teacher, however, stressed on the necessity of considering how it would be possible to develop children's appreciation ability through using in-school communication system effectively.

Conclusion

There exists a way of thinking where in-school communication system is considered as one of the media education opportunities since its beginning in the early postwar period, while quite a few schools have kept their progress ever since in spite of the quantitative development of apparatus. It is evident that some difficulties exist in pursuing practices creatively even at present. Nevertheless we can find some teachers, struggling towards making better use of the system for media education, who are aware of the importance of it in the present social and educational circumstances.

Table 2. Results of Questionnaire

% of in-school communication system use	100(no=20)
% of audio receiving system use	100
% of visual receiving system use	95
Contents of the Programs (no=74)	
announcements and direction	17.6
story telling	16.2
music	13.5
news of the season	10.8
repeat of school broadcast programs	10.8
signals and signs	5.4
news topics	2.7
community report	2.7
drama	2.7
teacher's speech	1.4
presentation of research results	1.4
opinion presentation	1.4
others	5.4
Sources of the Programs (no=34)	
broadcast programs	14.7
local production	55.9
programs on sale	29.4

Disseminating Time (no=20)	
recess (before class, intermission, & after school)	95.0
class hours	5.0
Purpose of Dissemination (no=31)	
enrichment of instruction	32.3
opportunity of extracurricular activities	25.8
channel of information offerings	41.9

Ways to Attract Pupils to In-School Communication
pick up familiar topics
programming by request and questionnaire
specification of audience
promoting children's activities
variety of programs (quiz and interview)
guiding mechanics operation
utilizing school events
Problems & Difficulty in In-School Communication
mannerism makes kids dull toward it
teachers cannot afford time for guiding children
guiding children to develop appreciation ability by production of programs
training of teachers for leaders
consideration of suitable environment for autonomous management by children
need for new equipment for better activities